

IDEA-0617

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3 January 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR : Colonel Beerli

SUBJECT : Comments on U-2 Major Accident Summary

1. I have several bones to pick with the subject paper being made ready for Mr. Bissell's signature to the DCI. Among them are the following not necessarily in order of importance:

a. In view of the fact that the Director is attempting to establish an opinion regarding the mechanical reliability of the U-2, I do not think we can automatically eliminate the 1 May Incident as is done in paragraph 2 of the covering memorandum. The way paragraph 2 is now written, it reads that we have had a total of nine major accidents, but "let's not consider 1 May and maybe it will go away". In a recent paper on vulnerability in connection with the TACKLE Project, we did treat the 1 May Incident as an instance of "undiagnosed malfunction", and I submit, therefore, that we should rewrite paragraph 2 and also include a squib in the summary about the Powers' incident as we have reconstructed it.

b. Under the summary attached to the paper, I would suggest under item 3 adding something to the effect that "the U-2 was not designed to withstand sudden and severe turbulence of the sort produced by jet wash; i.e., it is only stressed for two positive g's and approximately one-half negative g. The way item 3 now reads, it seems to me the Director would need to be an airman in order to understand the implications of the jet wash phenomena.

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c. Under item 5, which was [] accident, I recall that the accident report indicated that [] had (1) been suffering from a gastric upset within twenty-four hours of the flight, and (2) having taken several candy bars in his flight suit aloft with him, which candy bars were never found. He also had a

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known habit of opening his face plate at altitude when he became hungry and suffered from lack of energy of the sort which sugar would correct. An open face plate seal could have also been a contributing cause to the accident.

d. Under item 6, while it is true that [] did not "maintain the fuel profile", you may recall that he also elected on his own to attempt an altitude record during this flight, and it was this which in reality appeared to cause him to over-consume fuel resulting in the flameout.

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e. Under item 7 you may or may not feel that it is indicated to mention the fact that the particular pilot involved had experienced navigation problems in the past.

f. Under item 9, having read the accident report, I do not believe it was fully established that any abnormal turbulence existed off the end of the runway; at least the testimony of the Base meteorologist, as well as ground observers, did not support this view. Perhaps a qualifying adjective like "possible" in front of "abnormal turbulence" would do the trick.

g. In view of the fact that the DCI reportedly was interested in the full spectrum of U-2 accidents including SAC, perhaps the covering memorandum should include a simple statement to the effect that "SAC U-2 accidents have not been treated in this document, since we do not have full and complete details on their mishaps immediately available".

2. Outside of the above, I think the paper should stand as is!

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